



**In the Matter of the Application of Great
River Energy and Itasca-Mantrap
Electrical Cooperative Association
Application for a Route Permit for the
RDO Project Transmission Line and
Substation in Hubbard County**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION**

PUC Docket No. ET2/TL-06-468

The above matter has come before the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce (the Department) for a decision on the Scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the proposed Great River Energy (GRE) RDO Project transmission line in Hubbard County.

The Department's Energy Facilities Permitting (EFP) Unit held a public information meeting on May 15, 2005, at the Straight River Township Hall near Park Rapids, Minnesota to discuss the proposed RDO Project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. The public was given until June 2, 2006, to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA.

During the scoping process, two public comment letters were received. GRE proposed an alternative be considered by the EA in this case.

Having reviewed the matter, and having consulted with the EFP staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Assessment will address the following matters:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Project Description
- 1.2 Project Location
- 1.3 Project Purpose
- 1.4 Project Alternatives
- 1.5 Sources of Information

2.0 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 PUC Permit Requirements
- 2.2 Environmental Assessment Requirement

- 2.3 Scoping of Environmental Impacts and Alternative Routes
- 2.4 Certificate of Need

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

- 3.1 Description of Environmental Setting
- 3.2 Potential Impacts on Human Settlement
 - 3.2.1 Socioeconomic
 - 3.2.2 Displacement
 - 3.2.3 Noise
 - 3.2.4 Aesthetics
 - 3.2.5 Human Health and Safety
- 3.3 Potential Impacts on Land-based Economics
 - 3.3.1 Recreation
 - 3.3.2 Prime Farmland
 - 3.3.3 Transportation
 - 3.3.4 Mining and Forestry
 - 3.3.5 Economic Development
 - 3.3.5 Archeological and Historic Resources
- 3.4 Potential Impacts on Natural Environment
 - 3.4.1 Air Quality
 - 3.4.2. Water Quality, Soils and Geology
 - 3.4.3 Groundwater and Wetlands
 - 3.4.4 Fish and Wildlife Resources
 - 3.4.5 Vegetation
- 3.5 Rare and Unique Natural Resources

4.0 ROUTE ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED

During the Scoping Process, GRE proposed a route alternative to consider in the EA. No other person or agency proposed a route alternative. The following route alternative will be evaluated in the EA:

- The route alternative proposed by GRE following the south side of Trunk Highway 87 for the double circuit portion of the proposed RDO transmission line rather than the north side of TH 87 as proposed by GRE in its Application.

The EA will evaluate the potential impacts, mitigation measures, and feasibility of the proposed route alternative. The EA will also evaluate the feasibility of the proposed route alternative.

5.0 PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

The Environmental Assessment will include a list of permits that will be required for the route permit to construct this project.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EA

The Environment Assessment will not consider the following matters:

1. Whether a different size, type or timing of transmission line should be built.
2. The no-build option.
3. Any alternative route(s) for the RDO Project or alternative site(s) for the Itasca-Mantrap substation not specifically Ordered above.

SCHEDULE

The EA shall be completed by July 15, 2006.

Signed this 14 day of June, 2006

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Glenn Wilson, Commissioner